

Benicia Arsenal Hospital (Building No. 1)
Benicia Industrial Park
Benicia
Solano County
California

HABS No. CA-1945

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BENICIA ARSENAL HOSPITAL
(Building No. 1)

HABS No. CA-1945

Location:Benicia Industrial Park, Benicia, Solano County,
California.USGS Benicia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 10.575660.4212010.Present Owner:Benicia Industrial, Inc. c/o Al Wanger, Vice-
President, Benicia Industrial Park, Benicia,
California 94510Present Occupant:

Vacant.

Significance:This building with its large, two-story ward and
a fireplace at each end is somewhat typical of
military hospitals in the nineteenth century. It
has served at different times as a chapel and an
officers' club.PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1854. This is the date on the original set of plans for the building (CA-1945-4) and is confirmed by the report of the Surgeon General in 1875 (see Supplemental Information below).
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original plans and construction: See CA-1945-5, "Hospital at Benicia Barracks, Ca." This 1854 drawing shows the building as it was built, a seven-bay front, one-and-a-half stories, and a T-shaped plan. The rear wing had a center hall with two rooms on each side.
4. Alterations and additions: The description of the hospital made in 1875 in the Surgeon General's report on military posts (see Supplemental Information, below) agrees in most details with a drawing made of the building in 1877 (See CA-1774-7). On this sheet, entitled "Plans of Buildings on U.S. Military Reserve of Benicia Barracks, Calif," are included a ground and upper story plan of the hospital. A smaller wing has been added to the original wing on the rear; together they housed the kitchen, dining room, wood shed, bathroom, "dead room", and stable. By this date the building also had two floor of wards in the front block.

On the interior, the most important change since the 1870s has been the conversion of the front ward rooms into one large two-story space to accommodate a chapel. It was apparently at this time that the present wall and ceiling materials were installed. The exterior of the building has changed very little since the 1870s, with the exception of the recent addition of a cupola. The porch columns were replaced probably in the 1960s, and the porch railing was replaced, probably in the 1950s.

- B. Historical Context: The earliest remaining building at the Benicia Arsenal, the Hospital was located in a grouping known as Benicia Barracks (CA-1774). Built by 1856, mostly from buildings that had been shipped from the east, the Benicia Barracks burned in 1922. Only the hospital survived. The Arsenal itself was first located southeast of the Barracks, and eventually moved about three quarters of a mile south. The hospital continued to be used as such throughout the nineteenth century. During World War II it served as the post chapel.

Prepared by: Robert Brueggmann
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
Summer, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A good example of nineteenth-century military architecture displaying fine stonework.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The seven-bay, one-and-a-half-story building is T-shaped, the front wing being approximately 72' x 24' and the rear wing approximately 45' x 36'.
2. Foundation: Sandstone with watertable, partially plastered.
3. Wall construction: Rusticated sandstone ashlar.

4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing stone walls with wood trusses. There are two interior bearing partitions in the rear wing. The wood truss is a truss-on-truss.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a wooden porch across the front of the building. The flat roof is supported by eight square wood columns, which are separated by a wood railing. Two concrete steps in the center lead up to the porch. Vertical boards enclose the porch sill.

An enclosed porch extends across the rear. There is a pent roof with wood and screen panels, now boarded up, and wood floor. Three doors lead from the porch to the outside.

6. Chimneys: There is a plastered brick chimney on the north and south ends of the front section. On the rear wing are two brick chimneys, the one on the south side plastered.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance in the center of the front section is a processed wood panel door surrounded by five-light side lights and a seven-light fixed transom window. There is a stone sill and an aluminum screen door.

At the rear are three entrance doors, wood panel with glass in the upper half, wood surrounds and stone sills. There is a transom window above the rear door from the kitchen. Wood-framed screen doors lead from the rear porch.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden single-hung windows on the front section have nine-over-nine-light sashes with stone sills. Pedimented wood surrounds with plinth blocks and splayed jambs form the interior trim. The six windows across the east front have white wooden shutters with iron holders. The windows in the gables have six-over-three-light sashes. Wooden double-hung windows on the rear have nine-over-six-light sashes, stone sills and splayed jambs.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Boxed cornice and eaves, sheet metal gutter and downspouts.
- c. Cupolas: There is a wooden cupola in the center of the front block on the ridge line.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: On the first floor, the front section is one large room. Behind it in the wing are several smaller rooms.
2. Stairways: The stairway to the balcony on the north end of the front section is a straight run to a landing where it turns and has one step up. The simple wood handrail is mounted on the wall at one side.
3. Flooring: Wood floors in the large front room. Linoleum covers the flooring in all other rooms.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls in the main front room are plywood with battens. Ceiling is fiber-board panels framed with wood and boxed-in exposed trusses. There are wood panels under the windows. Other walls are gypsum board, painted, and ceilings are fiber panels. One room has plywood panel, finished natural.
5. Doorways and doors: Wood panel doors have surrounds.
6. Decorative features: The projecting fireplace in the main room is brick, wood surround with plinth blocks, wood mantel and brick hearth. Fireplaces in two south rooms are flush with wall, brick, wood surrounds, mantel and brick hearth. The fireplace in the northwest room projects into the room, is brick with wood mantel, wood surround and brick hearth.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: There are two floor furnaces in the main room.
 - b. Lighting: Cove lighting in the main room and modern lighting fixtures in other rooms.

D. Site:

The building faces east, sitting in the Benicia Industrial Park, formerly Benicia Arsenal. A manufacturing plant is across the asphalt-paved street on the east. A concrete sidewalk leads up to the front porch and a concrete sidewalk leads around the south side of the building and across the west side. There is an abandoned cistern near the southwest corner of the building. Vegetation is sparse with a few trees around the site.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings Survey
Summer, 1976

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

"Hospital at Benicia Barracks Ca." Black ink on paper with pencil corrections and notes. 13 x 16. Pencil notation across top of drawing: "Not finished." Notation at upper right: "Plan approved, the walls will be of stone, that is, the exterior walls. Benicia 27 Sept. 1854, John S. Wool, Major General." National Archives, Cartographic Division, Record Group 77, Benicia Barrack 1, No. 3 (HABS No. CA-1945-5).

The hospital is seen on the upper right of "Plans of Buildings on U.S. Military Reserve of Benicia Barracks." Black ink on linen. Notation in ink: "This tracing was furnished on Feb. 19, 1878." Notation to left: "Engineers' Office, Head Qrs. Military Division of Pacific Department of California. San Francisco, Calif. Nov. 29, 1877." There are several other notations on the sheet. Contains plans and elevations of buildings at the Barracks, including two plans and a front elevation of the hospital. National Archives, Cartographic Division, Record Group 77, Benicia Barracks, No. 3 (HABS No. CA-1774-7).

B. Early Views:

"Benicia Barracks, Frank J. Stumm, Publisher, Benicia Calif., No. 1915, Made in Germany." Stumm postcard, ca. 1890-1915. Collection Emily Pine, Benicia. This view shows the building from the southeast, apparently with a coat of paint and contrasting trim.

Photograph labeled "BA 1837-4," dated 8-28-44. U.S. Army Photograph. Location of original unknown; photocopied for HABS in the 1950s (See HABS No. CA-1843-4). This view shows the building while it was being used as a post chapel in World War II.

C. Supplemental Information

From John S. Billings, "Report on the Hygiene of the United States Army with Descriptions of Military Posts," U.S. Surgeon General's Circular No. 8 (Washington, 1875).

The hospital consists of a main building 74 by 24 feet, one and a half stories high, built of sandstone in 1854, and adjoining this on the west is a one-story stone building, 36 by 45 feet, containing the

dispensary, store-room, prisoners' ward, and two rooms for steward's quarters; in the rear of and adjoining this latter building is a frame addition, 29 by 16 feet, containing the kitchen and mess room. The lower floor of the main building contains two wards each 30 by 22 feet in the clear, 15 feet high from floor to ceiling, and having each a capacity for eight beds, giving 1,235 cubic feet air-space to a bed. The upper floor also contains two wards with a capacity for four beds each. The main building fronts east and has a hall 9 feet wide through the center leaving a ward on each side; this hall is continued through the entire length of the addition. The hospital is located about one hundred and twenty yards outside of the parade grounds. It is well-lighted, is warmed by wood fire places and is well ventilated. The latrines are in the rear, drainage is good and falls away from the building. In the rear of the hospital is a small frame building used as a wood shed in one den of which is a room 12 by 12 feet containing a fire place and intended to serve as a bathroom; it is very inconvenient and useless except as a mere lavatory. There is a cistern under the hospital with a capacity of 37,000 gallons. There is no danger of fire external to the building itself as it is isolated. The only means of subduing a fire is by bucket.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with Exxon Company, U.S.A. (a division of Exxon Corporation) and the Benicia Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of H.A.B.S., the project was completed during the summer of 1976 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Benicia, California, by John P. White (Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University), Project Supervisor; Robert Brueggmann (University of Pennsylvania), Project Historian; Kenneth Payson (Cornell University), Architect; and student assistant architects Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania); James L. Cook (Texas Tech University); and Gary A. Statkus (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland in the HABS Washington office in January, 1981.